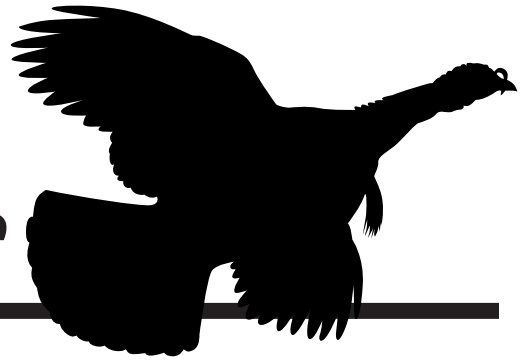

2004 Wisconsin Wild Turkey Update



Spring 2003 Turkey Season in Review

Wisconsin turkey hunters registered 42,970 birds during the spring 2003 season, an increase of 9% over the 2002 spring harvest of 39,336. While hunter success rates remain stable, around 25% in recent years, the state turkey population continues to expand its range. In addition, bird density within that range is stable or increasing and both factors lead to a larger number of permits.

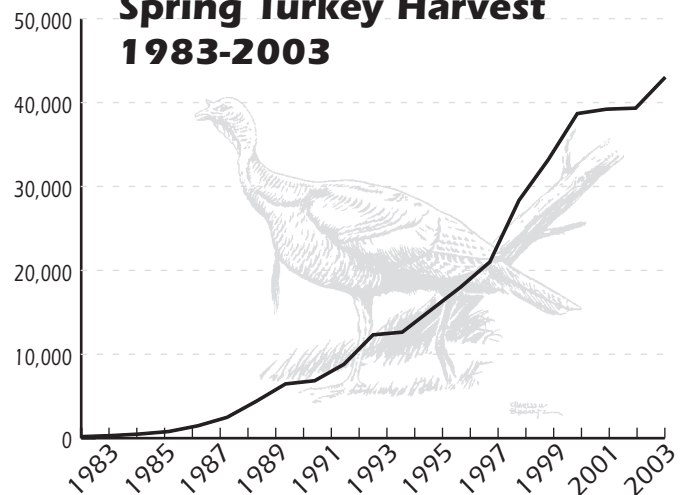
This season set a high mark for hunter safety. This was the second spring turkey season since 1991 to be completely accident free.

Final permit levels for the spring 2004 season have been set. There will be 185,367 permits available for the 43 turkey management zones and 12 state park units this spring. This is an increase of about 16,700 permits over the 2003 spring wild turkey season. Permit numbers are evenly distributed throughout the six time periods to provide a quality hunting experience. In addition, three new state parks will be open to spring turkey hunting for the second year as part of a 3-year sunset rule. They include Interstate, Willow River, and Newport State Parks. Successful applicants for the spring 2004 drawing in zones 34 and 37 in time periods A through C will be eligible to apply for a second drawing by Feb. 20 that would allow them authorization to hunt in one of these three state park properties. If drawn, they will be allowed access to the park during the time period in which they hold a valid permit/carcass tag. This does not authorize the harvest of an additional turkey.

The 2004 spring season, which consists of 6 time periods, will begin April 14 and run through May 23.

During the spring hunt there are many unique hunting opportunities including the Learn to Hunt Program. This program focuses on educating

**Spring Turkey Harvest
1983-2003**



inexperienced first-time turkey hunters both young and old. The Learn to Hunt Program provides an opportunity for first time hunters to have a high quality, safe and rewarding hunting experience under guidance from a hunting mentor. Mentors provide instruction, safety tips, and set-up for the hunt. Programs such as this are held throughout the state by conservation clubs and volunteers. If you are interested in attending or holding a Learn to Hunt Program in your area, contact your local wildlife manager for further information.

Hunters are reminded that baiting for wild turkeys while hunting is illegal and can result in a fine with the potential of license revocation. Hunters or others who become aware of anyone baiting for wild turkeys or violating any hunting regulation, can call 1-800-847-9367 (1-800-TIP-WDNR) or #367 by cellular phone. These numbers can be used statewide, 24 hours a day, and are confidential. These numbers are not informational numbers and should be used strictly to report violations.



Wisconsin 2003 Spring Turkey Harvest and Permit Success Rates.

Success rates are uncorrected for nonparticipation.

Zone	A		B		C		D		E		F		Total	
	Kill	%Success	Kill	%Success	Kill	%Success	Kill	%Success	Kill	%Success	Kill	%Success	Kill	%Success
01	161	40%	124	31%	124	31%	96	24%	96	24%	55	14%	656	27%
02	297	33%	209	23%	194	22%	182	20%	143	16%	106	12%	1,131	21%
03	542	33%	460	28%	390	24%	322	20%	263	16%	198	12%	2,175	22%
04	297	35%	247	29%	231	27%	201	24%	115	14%	122	14%	1,213	24%
4A	8	67%	7	58%	6	50%	0	#DIV/0!	0	#DIV/0!	0	#DIV/0!	21	58%
05	294	35%	250	29%	227	27%	163	19%	164	19%	123	15%	1,221	24%
5A	5	42%	2	17%	6	46%	0	#DIV/0!	0	#DIV/0!	0	#DIV/0!	13	35%
5B	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	#DIV/0!	0	#DIV/0!	0	#DIV/0!	0	0%
06	298	37%	268	33%	227	28%	168	21%	238	29%	133	16%	1,332	27%
07	418	38%	343	31%	319	29%	275	25%	264	24%	232	21%	1,851	28%
08	240	40%	181	30%	179	30%	147	25%	152	25%	175	29%	1,074	30%
09	140	40%	129	37%	107	31%	83	24%	64	18%	41	12%	564	27%
10	120	34%	84	24%	75	21%	67	19%	38	11%	21	6%	405	19%
10A	2	22%	1	13%	2	25%	0	#DIV/0!	0	#DIV/0!	0	#DIV/0!	5	20%
10B	0	#DIV/0!	0	0%	0	#DIV/0!	0	#DIV/0!	0	#DIV/0!	0	#DIV/0!	0	0%
11	266	41%	186	28%	142	22%	116	18%	89	14%	61	9%	860	22%
11A	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	#DIV/0!	0	#DIV/0!	0	#DIV/0!	0	0%
12	242	37%	212	33%	179	27%	137	21%	127	20%	89	14%	986	25%
12A	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	#DIV/0!	0	#DIV/0!	0	#DIV/0!	0	0%
13	236	39%	173	29%	157	26%	130	22%	118	20%	43	7%	857	24%
13A	4	33%	3	25%	2	17%	0	#DIV/0!	0	#DIV/0!	0	#DIV/0!	9	25%
14	204	34%	143	24%	108	18%	86	14%	92	15%	53	9%	686	19%
15	209	35%	198	33%	162	27%	132	22%	114	19%	74	12%	889	25%
15A	1	20%	2	40%	1	25%	0	#DIV/0!	0	#DIV/0!	0	#DIV/0!	4	29%
15B	1	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	#DIV/0!	0	#DIV/0!	0	#DIV/0!	1	33%
15C	4	24%	5	31%	2	13%	0	#DIV/0!	0	#DIV/0!	0	#DIV/0!	11	22%
16	179	36%	160	32%	124	25%	101	20%	100	20%	62	12%	726	24%
17	304	41%	276	37%	229	31%	195	26%	176	23%	152	20%	1,332	30%
18	401	33%	315	26%	290	24%	236	20%	207	17%	166	14%	1,615	22%
19	368	40%	323	35%	253	28%	239	26%	236	26%	173	19%	1,592	29%
20	240	32%	261	35%	195	26%	175	23%	226	30%	125	17%	1,222	27%
21	421	35%	423	35%	305	25%	282	23%	259	22%	220	18%	1,910	27%
22	1,138	35%	901	28%	695	21%	669	21%	584	18%	386	12%	4,373	22%
23	676	34%	562	28%	434	22%	357	18%	343	17%	293	15%	2,665	22%
24	106	53%	73	37%	69	34%	72	36%	74	37%	54	27%	448	37%
25	153	38%	149	37%	110	28%	102	26%	96	24%	76	19%	686	29%
25A	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	33%	1	33%	2	67%	4	22%
26	119	40%	102	34%	100	33%	55	18%	73	24%	62	21%	511	28%
27	78	39%	71	36%	61	31%	63	32%	50	25%	38	19%	361	30%
28	101	36%	78	28%	58	21%	65	24%	60	22%	69	25%	431	26%
29	49	33%	40	27%	29	19%	17	11%	21	14%	12	8%	168	19%
30	95	42%	73	32%	61	27%	64	28%	62	28%	52	23%	407	30%
31	70	35%	42	21%	27	14%	22	11%	18	9%	14	7%	193	16%
32	51	26%	44	22%	34	17%	21	11%	26	13%	17	9%	193	16%
33	254	46%	220	40%	183	33%	178	32%	166	30%	142	26%	1,143	35%
34	285	52%	265	48%	211	38%	221	40%	183	33%	166	30%	1,331	40%
35	103	41%	93	37%	71	28%	67	27%	68	27%	46	18%	448	30%
36	166	37%	153	34%	112	25%	93	21%	98	22%	82	36%	704	28%
37	291	42%	264	38%	244	35%	191	27%	227	32%	170	24%	1,387	33%
38	114	29%	118	30%	94	24%	58	14%	75	19%	50	13%	509	21%
39	163	30%	162	30%	91	17%	104	19%	89	17%	57	11%	666	21%
40	42	21%	73	37%	79	40%	53	26%	65	33%	49	25%	361	30%
41	70	35%	107	53%	70	35%	75	38%	47	24%	60	30%	429	36%
42	160	40%	171	43%	124	31%	106	27%	94	24%	76	19%	731	30%
43	63	42%	74	49%	43	29%	68	45%	57	38%	31	21%	336	37%
FM	31	31%	47	45%	16	16%	11	10%	5	14%	7	20%	117	24%
Unks	1	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	0%	5	0%	7	0%
Total	10,281	36%	8,867	31%	7,252	26%	6,266	22%	5,864	21%	4,440	16%	42,970	25%

Fall 2003 Turkey Hunting Season

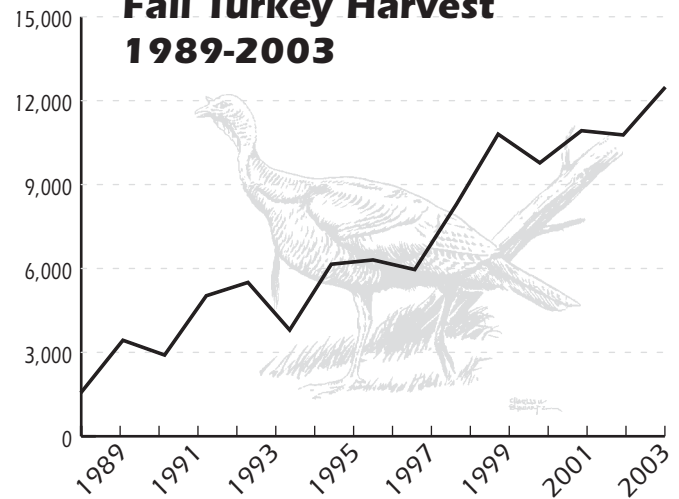
Wisconsin saw another successful fall turkey hunting season in 2003. The fall season was held October 11 through November 9. Approximately 78,750 permits were issued for the 30-day season. This was an increase of nearly 4,000 permits over the 2002 fall permit level. Increases in permit levels can be attributed to an expanding turkey population, mild winters, and good reproduction and survival. Preliminary permit levels for the 2004 fall season have been set with 84,600 permits available. Permit levels will be finalized during the spring by the DNR Turkey Advisory Committee.

The registered fall harvest was 12,466 turkeys taken statewide with the largest number of birds harvested in zone 21. The statewide hunter success rate was estimated at 15.8%. This was an increase over the 2002 fall harvest of 10,850 turkeys.

During the fall season, all turkeys, male and female are legal for harvest. The fall harvest consisted of 39% males, 60% females, and 1% were registered as unknowns. Adults made up 58% of the harvest.

Turkeys spend a great deal of the daylight hours in hardwood habitat during the fall. Both brood flocks and adult male flocks make extensive use of areas dominated by oak and hickory. Before the fall season, hunters should monitor the acorn crop in the area they hunt, as the success or failure of acorns can determine where turkeys will be feeding. In years of poor acorn production, turkeys spend proportionately more time in cornfields.

**Fall Turkey Harvest
1989-2003**



Hunters are reminded to fill out all turkey hunting survey information that they receive in the mail. Both fall and spring turkey hunting questionnaires help provide valuable information on hunter perceptions of the wild turkey hunting program in Wisconsin. Last fall approximately 3,837 surveys were returned out of 6,000 mailed questionnaires. Respondents reported a high satisfaction level with the Wisconsin wild turkey program. The most common hunting method among respondents was ambushing from concealment. Seventy percent of respondents prepared for their hunt by attending a turkey hunter education clinic sponsored by WDNR and the National Wild Turkey Federation. Surveys also found that the majority of turkey hunters are inexperienced; approximately 70% of respondents had fewer than 5 years fall turkey hunting experience.





Wisconsin 2003 Fall Turkey Harvest by Zone,

Sex, Age, Permits Issued and % Success

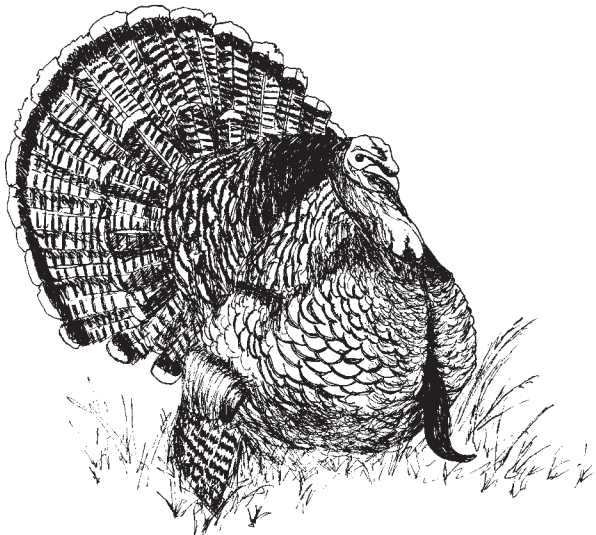
Zone	Toms	Jakes	Hens	Juv Hens	Unks	Total Harvest	Permits Issued	% Success
1	36	21	70	69	0	196	1,199	16.3%
2	49	22	71	90	0	232	1,800	12.9%
3	37	84	168	165	0	554	4,515	12.3%
4	35	26	38	24	7	130	1,002	13.0%
5	72	41	106	66	0	285	2,601	11.0%
6	30	14	45	42	0	131	1,400	9.4%
7	88	45	117	103	0	353	2,803	12.6%
8	57	26	50	44	0	177	1,402	12.6%
9	62	38	115	102	0	317	1,501	21.1%
10	12	6	18	21	0	57	601	9.5%
11	50	37	79	110	22	298	2,003	14.9%
12	114	61	125	135	21	456	3,0	15.2%
13	49	13	55	42	0	159	1,201	13.2%
14	41	32	72	82	0	227	1,799	12.6%
15	84	62	131	114	0	391	2,705	14.5%
16	58	32	58	46	9	203	1,699	11.9%
17	152	79	140	145	1	517	3,602	14.4%
18	142	98	194	167	0	601	4,502	13.3%
19	114	49	157	88	1	409	2,201	18.6%
20	89	57	92	89	0	327	2,100	15.6%
21	226	115	369	318	1	1,029	4,805	21.4%
22	270	116	334	256	5	981	5,011	19.6%
23	236	104	262	285	7	894	6,807	13.1%
24	84	32	49	50	6	221	1,201	18.4%
25	52	22	41	33	4	152	1,005	15.1%
26	25	17	15	25	7	89	602	14.8%
27	16	7	20	13	8	64	400	16.0%
28	22	14	17	27	1	81	603	13.4%
29	5	1	2	1	1	10	100	10.0%
30	55	19	47	38	0	159	801	19.9%
31	13	9	10	5	1	38	300	12.7%
32	7	8	12	3	1	31	200	15.5%
33	120	54	134	74	4	386	1,801	21.4%
34	228	67	224	175	30	724	3,004	24.1%
35	30	16	37	26	0	109	601	18.1%
36	53	15	53	35	2	158	700	22.6%
37	140	33	157	80	0	410	2,801	14.6%
38	56	54	56	52	4	222	1,199	18.5%
39	43	14	46	67	0	170	1,250	13.6%
40	4	3	16	26	0	49	201	24.4%
41	31	17	36	27	0	111	704	15.8%
42	40	24	63	43	0	170	700	24.3%
43	25	18	29	17	0	89	399	22.3%
FM	28	7	22	42	0	99	0	0.0%
UNK	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Totals	3,280	1,629	3,952	3,462	143	12,466	78,831	15.8%

Permit Changes for 2004 Season

Beginning the 2004 spring season, successful spring turkey applicants will notice an obvious change to their turkey permits. Permits and regulations will no longer be mailed to successful spring and fall turkey applicants. Instead, the Department will be sending a postcard notifying *successful* permit applicants of their status. After receiving notification, permit winners will be instructed to purchase a 2004 spring turkey license and stamp approval at any licensing vendor available mid-March. A tie-on carcass tag will be printed at the time of purchase along with the turkey license and stamp approval. Successful patron license holders who purchase their licenses for the new year should take note that their spring turkey permit information will automatically print out with their other licenses at time of purchase, which will not result in an extra trip to a licensing agent. Fall applicants will experience a similar situation except for successful patron license holders will be mailed their permit and regulations. This mailing change will be a more effective use of hunter dollars.

Season Changes Proposed at Spring Hearings

As the Department and the Conservation Congress are continually looking at ways to improve the turkey season and present more opportunities to hunters, three proposed changes regarding Wisconsin turkey hunting will be added to the spring hearing questions in 2004. Spring hearings occur statewide in mid-April and allow the public to comment on natural resource proposed rule changes.



The first issue will be in regards to beginning a fall turkey hunting season October 1 and continuing for forty consecutive days. Currently the fall season begins on the Saturday nearest to October 10 and continues for 30 consecutive days. Fall turkey hunting success rates have been declining, not due to fewer birds but rather conflicts with other fall hunting opportunities. By allowing 10 extra days fall turkey hunters will be able to enjoy an extended hunting season and increase their chances at bagging a bird.

The second question that will be up to debate will be allowing fall turkey hunting with dogs. Fall turkey hunting with dogs is a tradition in many southern states. This rule change would allow hunters to use dogs to aid in scattering fall flocks or recovery of a wounded bird. It also allows another opportunity method for taking a bird.

The third spring hearing question related to turkey hunting will focus on zoning the northern portion of the state for turkey hunting. Currently the northern portion of the state is not zoned for turkey hunting. By allowing creation of three additional turkey management zones (44, 45, and 46) the DNR Turkey Advisory Committee will be able to set permit levels for that region and allow hunters additional hunting opportunity. Regional staff have documented huntable numbers of turkeys in that area and have had requests from the public to open turkey management zones in the northern portion of the state. Turkey hunting in these new zones in northern Wisconsin could begin as early as spring 2005.

How are Permit Levels Determined

The goal of the Wisconsin wild turkey management program is to maintain a secure population capable of supporting a safe, high quality hunt with reasonable hunting success. The season framework is set to minimize interference among hunters, as well as to reflect turkey population densities and distribution.

Permit levels for turkey hunters are based on a number of factors including the amount of turkey habitat, the sex ratio of the population, recruitment, hunter success rates, and gobbler harvest rates. Harvest in each zone is determined by mandatory registration. The DNR turkey advisory committee also looks at factors including interference rates, hunter effort, and hunter satisfaction that is reported through questionnaires sent to a sample of turkey hunters

each spring and fall. Rural landowners in southern Wisconsin are surveyed annually to report their observations of turkey broods during summer. Poulth:hen ratios calculated from these reports provide another index of recruitment. In addition, local wildlife biologist and hunter input is considered when making determinations regarding zone quotas.

Regulations are based on biological information and law enforcement concerns, together with the desires of turkey hunters. Hunters regularly provide advice to wildlife managers through responding to questionnaires, active involvement with the Wisconsin National Wild Turkey Federation and other conservation organizations, the Conservation Congress Turkey Committee, and public hearings.

Permit Issuance

Hunters must apply to receive a permit to hunt turkeys in Wisconsin. The application deadline for the 2004 fall hunt is August 10, the deadline for the 2005 spring hunt is December 10. Applications cost \$3 and are available through any licensing agent or can be purchased online at: www.wildlifelicense.com/wi. Deadlines are set early to allow for processing time of the applications.

Turkey permits are distributed by drawing using a preference system which determines which applications go into the drawing first, second, etc. First preference is resident landowners, second preference is residents who applied for, but did not receive a spring permit the previous year, third preference is all other residents. Nonresident landowners followed by other nonresident

applicants are fourth and fifth preference respectively. The number of permits for each zone are divided equally amongst each of the six spring time periods. Success in the drawing depends on the number of permits vs. the number of applicants for each time period. Those who restrict their choices to only the early time periods may not draw a permit, while those who apply for any time period may receive two. If permits remain after the first drawing, a second drawing is conducted to issue remaining tags.

Wild Turkey Research in Wisconsin

With a steadily increasing turkey population and increased interest in turkey hunting, there is a need to enhance our understanding of wild turkey population dynamics and habitat requirements in Wisconsin. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Wild Turkey Advisory Committee is cooperating in research efforts with the University of Wisconsin-Madison to study Wisconsin's wild turkey population. The goals of the research are to provide information on wild turkey habitat suitability and population dynamics that will improve and enhance the allocation of revenue available through the turkey stamp funds for habitat improvement projects. The first stage of research involves analyzing harvest data and information gathered from the annual turkey hunting questionnaires sent to random turkey hunters. In the second stage of the project, turkeys will be radio-marked to help evaluate survival, hunting mortality, nest success, and quantify activity and habitat use.

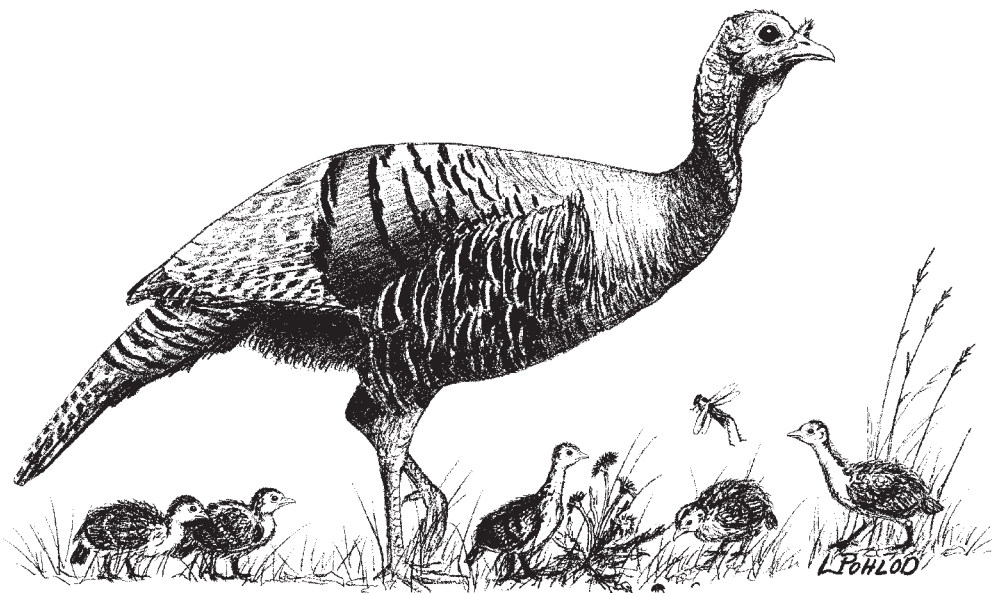


Table 1 Wisconsin Turkey Hunting Accidents, 1983-2003

Spring Season				Fall Season			
Spring Season	Number of accidents	# of permits issued	# of accidents per 100,000 permits	Fall Season	Number of accidents	# of permits issued	# of accidents per 100,000 permits
1983	0	1,200	0	1988*	1	0	~
1984	0	1,900	0	1989	1	7,160	14
1985	0	2,125	0	1990	1	12,465	8
1986	0	3,495	0	1991	2	16,671	12
1987	0	6,040	0	1992	0	24,998	0
1988	1	11,071	9	1993	2	31,449	6.4
1989	1	21,280	4.7	1994	4	17,600	22.7
1990	2	29,887	6.7	1995	2	29,858	6.7
1991	1	37,171	2.7	1996	0	30,779	0
1992	2	43,972	4.5	1997	4	32,185	12.4
1993	4	61,338	6.5	1998	0	40,750	0
1994	3	71,420	4.2	1999	1	55,479	1.8
1995	3	68,588	4.4	2000	2	69,566	2.9
1996	0	75,360	0	2001	2	71,601	2.8
1997	3	92,734	3.2	2002	2	74,659	2.7
1998	1	100,347	1	2003	2	78,751	2.5
1999	1	110,457	0.9	Total	26	593,971	Average 4.4
2000	3	132,318	2.3				
2001	6	150,403	4				
2002	6	159,542	3.8				
2003	0	168,696	0				
Total	37	1,349,344	Average 2.7				

*not a season, hunter went hunting illegally

Keeping Safe During the Hunt

Since turkey hunting began in 1983, 63 accidents, three of these having fatalities, occurred during the spring and fall turkey hunting seasons. Of those, 37 accidents have occurred in the spring and 26 have occurred during the fall turkey season (Table 1).

Hunters this past spring set a high mark for safety with no hunting accidents being reported. This was the first spring since 1996 with no spring turkey hunting accidents. All hunters are to be commended for doing their part and practicing safe hunting practices. During the 2003 fall season, two hunting accidents occurred when hunters misidentified another hunter for a turkey. In the fall, turkey hunters are reminded they need to be aware of other hunters in the woods bowhunting and small game hunting. Most of these incidences occur when the shooter fails to identify their target and mistakes another person for a turkey. One scenario is when a hunter loses track of their caller or hunting partner. They then see or hear a "turkey", shoot and then find out it was their hunting partner. It is important that hunters keep in mind **safety** at all times when hunting!

Turkey hunting can be dangerous because hunters are fully camouflaged and making calls to attract turkeys. But if hunters follow some basic hunting rules everyone can have a safe hunting experience. Assume every movement and every sound is another hunter. If another hunter is approaching, do

not wave to them to get their attention. Some hunters have mistaken a waving hand for a turkey fan, so call out to them until they notice you. When you hunt, don't hunt in heavy brush. The brush blocks your view and prevents other hunters from seeing you. Turkey hunting is an exciting sport. The adrenaline can really get pumping, but hunters need to learn how to control their emotions when hunting. Don't feel pressured to harvest a turkey. No bird is worth injuring or killing a person.

All hunting accidents can be prevented. Prevention involves knowing and obeying basic safety rules. By following the three basic rules for handling firearms, you can help prevent a potential firearm-related incident.

- 1) Treat every firearm as if it is loaded.
- 2) Always point the muzzle in a safe direction.
- 3) Be sure of your target and beyond. Responsible hunters are certain of their target before firing!

For more information on turkey biology and behavior, hunting methods, regulations, safety precautions, and hunter/landowner ethics attend a *Free Turkey Hunter Education Clinic*. Clinics are held statewide, February through April. To find clinic information in your area a listing will be available at all license vendors and on the DNR Website at: www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/wildlife/hunt/turkey, or by calling 608-261-8458.

Where Does Your Turkey Stamp Money Go?

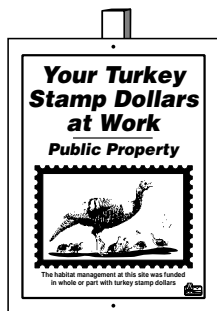
Your purchase of the wild turkey stamp helps to provide for future opportunities for turkey management and hunting in Wisconsin. All turkey hunters are required to purchase the \$5.25 turkey stamp to legally hunt turkeys in Wisconsin. Sale of the turkey stamp brings in over \$400,000 annually for habitat management and restoration projects, education, research, equipment, and for managing the turkey program in our state. Funds are available to DNR personnel, conservation groups, and other organizations. Project proposals that are submitted are reviewed and approved by the DNR turkey management committee and the Wildlife Policy Team.

In fiscal years 2002-03' over 1.1 million dollars was allocated to 99 projects. Many projects were only partially funded by turkey stamp funds. Cost-sharing from other organizations such as Wings Over Wisconsin, the National Wild Turkey Federation, and other conservation groups plays an important role in accomplishing these projects. Over \$726,000 was contributed in cost-shared dollars. FY2002-03' projects affected over 43,000 acres in Wisconsin.

Here are a few of the highlights from FY2002-03' Turkey Stamp Projects:

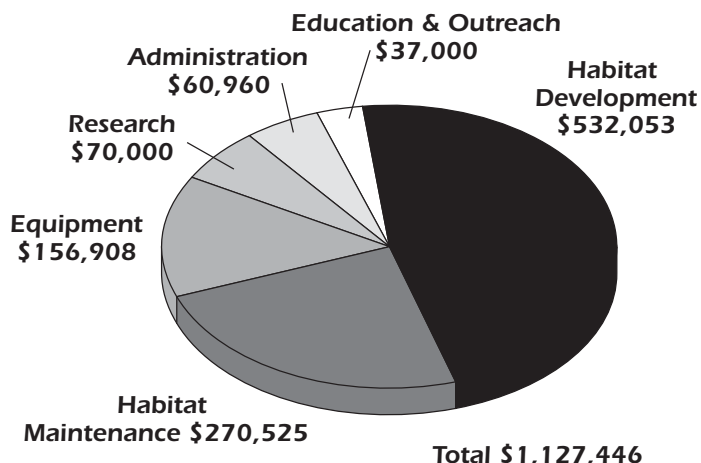
Maintaining oak openings and prairies for turkeys in Southern Wisconsin- Approximately 250 acres of remnant prairie and oak savanna areas were restored on both private and public properties. Invasive brush species were removed and areas were inter-seeded with prairie grasses and forbs. Over 300 acres were burned to maintain open oak woodlands, prairie, and oak savanna. Improving turkey habitat on these areas will provide improved foraging, nesting, and brood-rearing habitat for the local turkey population.

Purchase of a Seed Stripper- A seed stripper/harvester was purchased with turkey stamp dollars along with cost-shared dollars. This equipment purchase has allowed the Glacial Habitat Restoration Area Program (GHRA) to save over \$7,000 in seed costs. Harvested seed is of local genotype and allows the program to increase the quality of grassland wildlife habitat plantings.



Burning of State Natural Areas- Over 2,340 acres on State Natural Areas (SNA's) were burned during the two-year project. Burning every 3-5 years is recommended to preserve grasslands and prevent brush and tree growth.

Develop Prairie- Thirty acres of fallow farm fields owned by the Department in Marinette County was restored to native grasses with use of turkey stamp dollars. Fields previously had cool season exotic grass cover and were marginal for turkey nesting habitat. Fields were burned and treated with herbicide, then planted to a mixture of native warm season grasses and forbs, which will be more beneficial to turkeys throughout the brood-rearing season.



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PUB-WM-268 2004

2004 Wild Turkey Update